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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TALLINN 000290

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SENSITIVE

FOR EUR/NB MIGUEL RODRIGUES

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [RS](#) [GG](#) [AM](#) [EN](#)  
SUBJECT: TFGG01: ESTONIAN FM PAET'S VISIT TO GEORGIA

Classified by: DCM Karen Decker for reasons 1.4 (b) & (d)

REF: STATE 89769

11. (C) SUMMARY. On August 15, Estonian Foreign Minister Urmas Paet embarked on a three day visit to Georgia. In addition to meetings with Georgian Prime Minister Vladimir Gurgendidze and Foreign Minister Eka Tkeshelashvili, Paet visited injured Georgians in a hospital and toured an Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camp and the city of Gori. The trip reaffirmed GOE concerns about Russian compliance with the terms of the ceasefire and the need for international peacekeepers in the conflict zone and the areas immediately surrounding South Ossetia. The GOE remains concerned about ongoing Russian military activity in Georgia, the damage to Georgian infrastructure and reports of crimes against Georgian citizens. Estonia has earmarked USD 1 million for humanitarian assistance to Georgia and is assessing how many peacekeepers it can contribute to an international peacekeeping mission. END SUMMARY

#### MEETINGS WITH OFFICIALS

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2.(C) On August 19, Poloff met with Harry Lahtein, Division Director for Eastern Europe and Central Asia and Toomas Tirs, Georgian Desk Officer at the Estonian MFA to discuss the details of FM Paet's recent visit to Georgia. Lahtein, former Charges de Affairs at the Estonian Embassy in Tbilisi, accompanied Paet on his visit. Lahtein described the situation in Georgia as 'not good' and observed that despite the cease-fire, Russian troops are moving around outside of the conflict zone. Lahtein stressed the importance of reaching a common understanding between Russia and Georgia on the terms of the cease fire. Specifically, Lahtein referenced paragraph 5 of the French six point agreement which states that Russian military forces should withdraw to pre-conflict positions. Lahtein commented that the GOG interprets this position as approximately '15 clicks' (kilometers) from Tskhinvali, while the GOR has interpreted this to mean '150 clicks' (kilometers) from Tskhinvali, which would place them beyond Tbilisi. Lahtein also stated that the GOE is opposed to buffer or security zones and that Russian troops should not be allowed to consider strategic highways and populated areas a part of their pre-conflict positions.

13. (C) During her meeting with FM Paet, Georgian FM Tkeshelashvili stressed the need to grant immediate access for international observers from the EU, UN or the OSCE not

only in the conflict zone, but in the areas immediately surrounding South Ossetia. Lahetin referenced unconfirmed reports of a 'concentration camp' in Kurta and atrocities against the ethnic Georgian military personnel and civilians in the conflict zone. According to Lahetin, GOG estimates put the number of missing Georgian military troops at approximately 200, while the GOR is reporting that only 5 Georgian troops are missing. The GOG is still in the process of counting missing civilians, but is estimating it could be in the thousands. IDPs are also becoming a serious issue. Not only does the GOR estimate that there are currently 120,000 IDPs in Georgia, the majority of whom are from Gori, but FM Paet and Lahetin witnessed first hand extensive looting of shops and destroyed homes in Gori.

¶4. (C) Also while touring Gori, FM Paet and Lahetin met with Russian General Vyatsheslav Borissov, whom Lahetin characterized as 'extremely drunk.' Borissov told Paet and Lahetin that his troops cannot leave Gori until they receive orders from Moscow. General Borissov also commented that Russian troops are unable to pull out of Gori now because without the troops there would be no 'law and order' or civilization.

¶5. (C) GOG officials hope that current Russian actions in Georgia have been a 'wake up' call to the western world that Russians should not serve in the future as peacekeepers. (Note: Lahetin commented that he is not hopeful the OSCE will approve a proposed 300 member OSCE observation team because Russia has a veto. End Note). The

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Estonian MOD is currently putting together a pool of potential candidates to serve in any future peacekeeping mission, but will only deploy peacekeepers under the umbrella of an international organization. (Note: Initial internal estimates by the EDF suggest Estonia could contribute 3 to 6 observers for an OSCE mission and an infantry platoon for peacekeeping. End Note.)

Estonia to the Rescue  
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¶6. (C) According to Tirs, the GOE has set aside USD 1 million for relief aid for Georgia. Approximately USD 300,000 was spent on the first shipment of blankets and medical supplies sent to Georgia via Yerevan on August 15 and a second shipment is being prepared for early next week. Estonia also sent two cyber security experts to Georgia who helped the GOG set up 'mirror sites' for government and banking sites that have been under constant attack since the hostilities began. The GOE is also considering contributing a couple of general physicians if they confirm a need for their services.

¶7. (C) COMMENT: We anticipate Estonian support for Georgia will remain intense for the foreseeable future. Concerns about broader Russian intentions underline each conversation we have. Both Lahetin and Tirs commented that there is already talk coming from Russia about the Crimea being a 'Russian territory' and that it is likely Ukraine will be next on Russia's list. At the same time, Estonia's pro-active stance on Georgia is also making some folks here worry about retaliation from Russia. Several GOE officials have publicly stated they are concerned for all countries with a sizeable population of Russian citizens. END COMMENT.

PHILLIPS